

THE OUTLAW

A Story of the Big West
And a "Bad Man's" Love
By JACKSON GREGORY

CHAPTER I. A Storm Brews.

It was young and like and him waited, as light of foot as a mountain cat, as quick of eye, as graceful with the free, swinging grace flowing from the supple strength of the range. With straight back, hair, black eyes, and a calm turned to a copper, burnished brown, he looked almost like an Indian. He stood on Queen City's one street, waiting for the Cleveland Express from New York.

Marshall, the telegraph operator, had caught one glimpse of him from the station window, and he tapped out the following message:

VICTOR DUFFRENE.
He is a lawbreaker.

"Hello, Hal," spoke a bystander, and "It's Black Hal, from the Bear Track," added two others.

Black Hal was a man of few friends, and certainly not a favorite in Queen City. Not only not welcomed by the denizens, it would seem that he was actively unwelcome.

Black Hal's latest visit to Queen City had been a couple of months before, and it had been memorable.

He had had some money, a great deal for him, and had spent it in the only way he knew, and freely. He had lost heavily in a poker game to a man named Victor Duffrene, a professional gambler widely known as Prince Victor, and had had trouble with the man who, he claimed, had robbed him.

Before morning he had run amuck, whirled into a mad, brutal, murderous frenzy of intoxication.

He had been captured by Dan Nesbit, sheriff, only when his guns were snatched and he himself was falling to the floor in a stupor.

He had aces up in the confoundingly square jail, and had been allowed to go on his way the next morning, as he had been released from the jail.

He had been in Queen City to-day on business for the ranchman who employed him, having been deputed to escort a "bunch of rascals" from the Overland Express to the ranch.

But the train was late—very late, and Hal was thirsty. Nor did he long let his thirst go unrelieved. As a result, he proceeded to get extremely drunk in the town.

"Prince" Victor appeared in town, as though by accident; and in a more or less friendly poker game in a saloon, he had won a great deal of money from Hal.

But Black Hal was drunk and resentful. When the prince, the preacher asked for a share of the first big pot Hal had won that night, the cowboy whirled about on him in rage.

"Take that, you — preacher!" he screamed.

Before a man could reach him to knock the gun from his hand, he had fled.

Big John Brent, not four feet away, threw his arms wide out, and with a look of dismay upon his face, fell heavily to the floor.

And Black Hal, before a man could draw his gun, crumpled up and fell unconscious upon the table.

Sibyl, sister of Oscar Estabrook, who managed the Bear Track Ranch, was the sort of woman a man's eye would find almost instinctively, the sort of woman who first holds his eyes and then his interest, and he was not long in finding her.

She was a woman of a certain heart and soul from his body. She was serene, would be serene under all circumstances. Black Hal thought subconsciously. Her color was ivory and dull gold. The masses of her loose-gathered hair were a deep, tawny yellow. Her large eyes were of the same color, cool and calm and tiny.

He turned from her to his horses. He did not even see the men and women crowding after her. He grew dizzy with something which was not the fumes of the saloon.

He was in haste to be gone. The memory of last night was not a pleasant thing to him.

He knew that he was alive to-day only because the ranchman had picked him up from the table where he had sprawled could not bring themselves to the execution of an unconscious man; that before he had gained direct understanding from John Brent, whom he had shot, had flourished up from the door with a bullet hole in his shoulder from which blood was oozing.

Black Hal had taken into his own lap the head of the man who had shot him, and with snarling lips had dashed him to the floor.

"He hurt no one but me," the big man had bellowed, forgetful in his rage at them of his own bleeding wound and brandishing the gun which had dropped from Black Hal's fingers.

"He belongs to me. He shall not be harmed this night. Would you have him feel the way was drunken and blasphemous into the presence of his Maker?"

"For shame! And call yourselves men! Can't you see he is only a boy?"

Yes, he knew how the preacher had worked with him until morning to sober him, and the hot, stinging shame still crept red into his cheeks.

He had laughed and mocked and jeered; he had called the preacher a fool and a soft-headed baby, he had not dignified to his feet, the oaths dropping from his lips as he walked.

But all of his bluster, all of his threats, all of his curses, all of his swagger to show them the real badness of him, had not sufficed to wine away from his memory the sting of the preacher's words, knowledge that the unnamed man, whom, in that blind moment, he had hated and tried to kill, was the man who had saved his life for him and who had spoken softly to him, almost motherly, saying to the wolf-eyed man about him, in hushed tones of pity:

"Why, he is only a boy!"

It was five o'clock now and at last the Overland had come.

Two heavy spring wagons, each with four restless horses, were waiting at the stable.

Dick Sperry, also of the Bear Track, was waiting there, too.

Black Hal called to the nine people he got down together from the



BIG JOHN BRENT THREW UP HIS HANDS AND FELL TO THE FLOOR.

His command was obeyed swiftly. Shoving one of the guns into his holster at his hip, he stood with the free hand swept up the horse bills on the floor, beginning to stuff them into his pocket.

As he lowered his head the bar-room door swung suddenly open.

"Han's up!"

Black Hal's voice was as cool, as indifferent, as steady and quiet and determined as the other had been.

Black Hal himself standing in the doorway, his hat pushed far back upon his head, his lips smiling, his eyes stern, his left hand upon his hip, his right hand outstretched with the other revolver thrust upon the man at the threshold.

Yvonne, near the door, started up a little cry that sounded like fear whipped from her lips. The man, who had just been thrown up, was now on his feet, his head bowed, his hands held out before him, his face as white as chalk.

As he leaped he jerked up the gun in his hand.

"But that out, pal!" Black Hal's voice again ringing ominously started the man, who had just been thrown up, to his feet.

"You know me. I'll drop you dead in your shoes if you try to use that gun. Han's up!"

The masked man paused quickly, dropped the gun and lifted his hands.

"Now, what's the matter with you?" Black Hal's voice again ringing ominously started the man, who had just been thrown up, to his feet.

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NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE NOVEL IN THE EVENING WORLD

No. 2 Schuyler Place

By HOWARD FITZALAN

How they been treatin' you? How they been treatin' you? How they been treatin' you?

He came to the stall where the horse was tied, and was greeted by an old man, who, with a look of surprise, said: "You're back, are you?"

"Yes, I am," he replied, and then he looked at the old man's face, which was lined with wrinkles, and he said: "You're old, aren't you?"

"I'm old, but I'm not dead yet," the old man replied, and then he looked at the young man's face, which was as fresh as a rose, and he said: "You're young, aren't you?"

"I'm young, but I'm not a child," the young man replied, and then he looked at the old man's face, which was lined with wrinkles, and he said: "You're old, aren't you?"

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CHAPTER III. Black Hat Dances.

THE days which followed were busy days upon the Bear Track. And they were gay days for the men and women who were placed for the first time in their bored lives where they could watch the workings of a big cattle range.

Oscar Estabrook, in their honor and for their amusement, had arranged that the big round-up came the first week after the arrival of his guests.

Always the gentlest of the middle-horses were left in the little pasture, where they might be had when Sibyl and Yvonne and Fern, Louis Dancer, and the slow-moving Mr. Cushing wanted them.

There were rides at dawn and by moonlight across the gently swelling meadow lands or back into the mountains, along steep, winding trails through the pines.

And always Louis Dancer followed Sibyl Estabrook like a shadow, and Oscar rode with Fern, and Yvonne watched them with eyes that were deep and very thoughtful, and sometimes very amused.

Of Black Hat they saw little those first few days. They knew that the Bear Track embraced some seventy-five thousand acres, and that Bear Track cattle grazed over two thousand acres of government acreage.

They knew that from edge to edge of the great, scattered herd of cattle and horses entrusted to the care of Oscar Estabrook by his father, Pompey Estabrook, there stretched many miles of mountain and meadow.

For weeks, however, Black Hat had ridden away upon the Colonel upon the afternoon of his arrival at the day's work.

It was a fine round-up, and with it came new faces to the Bear Track. Among the newcomers was "Prince" Victor Duffrene. And gambling and drinking, as usual, went heavily.

So did Oscar Estabrook. In fact, despite Fern's pleadings, he played night after night against Duffrene and always lost.

Then, the ranch, for the round-up and the dances and other festivities, came preacher John Brent, and, undisturbed by Black Hat's sudden disappearance, he proceeded to renew acquaintance with that tavern youth.

One evening at a ranch dance Sibyl sent for Hal.

"We have seen almost nothing of you since you brought us out from Queen City," she said graciously.

He had taken her proffered hand and bowed, and then he said: "I was again turning my hat in his hands." "And I had wanted to see you again."

"What for?" he demanded, frowning a little, feeling a little uncomfortable, knowing that the judge and Mr. Cushing and many others were watching them.

"For vengeance," she said, and now was again turning his hat in his hands. "And I had wanted to see you again."

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CHAPTER II. Bear Track Ranch.

"OW," he said crisply. "I got to be goin'." You folks can turn your faces to the wall while I pick this maxima up.

"I beg pardon," he gasped.

"That's all right, Fatty. You can cut it short. You can also take your own long enough to dig. An' dig fast."

Mr. Cushing's right hand shot into his pocket, coming out with a handful of greenbacks, which he proffered to the men and women who were waiting for him.

GOING AWAY FOR THE SUMMER? Remember The Evening World prints each week a complete up-to-date novel—a week's reading! Have The Evening World sent to your summer address.